

Day 25: Lake by PaperBodies

Series: [Harringrove April Challenge \[16\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: It works out though, M/M, Pre-Relationship, a tiny bit of angst, references to the death of a parent

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Characters: Billy Hargrove, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

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Summary:

It's cold and rain is falling in a fine mist as Steve stares out across the landscape. It's pretty, but not spectacular—a shallow lake surrounded by trees, a snow-capped mountain visible in the distance. Steve's not even sure why he's here, except for an offhand comment made by a girl on an airplane half a year ago. "Lost Lake," she said, when he asked what he should go see on his travels. "There's a couple of them, so you have to be sure you have the right one. It drains every spring and refills every winter. There's a legend about it: if you're very lucky, the lake might bring back something that you lost when it returns. So you go there in the summer, when it's a grassy meadow, and you ask. Then you come back when the rain starts up again and the lake returns, and you see what happens." He was here three months ago on a perfect day—blue sky arching overhead, fluffy white clouds, the sighing of the wind in the trees. He looked out over the grassy expanse of meadow and asked.

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Steve doesn't expect it to work—he's never been lucky. He didn't even ask for something he lost. He knows by now that things don't come back. Not for him. Instead he's at Lost Lake looking for something he never had. That golden skin pressed to his, muscles moving underneath it. Those blue eyes, soft on his face. That fucking mouth, curved not into a smirk but into a genuine smile, small and private and just for him. What he's looking for is out there, somewhere. Walked out of the hospital six months after Starcourt and disappeared completely, aside from an occasional call or postcard to Max. Steve had no real reason to care, at the time. Billy Hargrove vanished from Hawkins, and Steve hardly ever thought about him for almost six years.

Not a single person in Steve's life knows what he's looking for. Steve knows *what*, but he doesn't know why he wants it. Isn't sure why he responded to his father's death by dreaming about a boy who usually only looked at him with a snarl on his face. Maybe he thinks if he can fix that one thing, he can fix all the other things too. If he can do that over, maybe he can do the whole thing over. Be better this time. Worthy.

He's pretty sure that isn't how it works, though. He's pretty sure

he's never going to be worthy.

Steve is twenty-eight, and he has two broken engagements and a successful career behind him, and sometimes he feels like he never left his dad's office. Like he spent the last nine years standing there, head slightly bowed, listening to what a fucking disappointment he turned out to be. His dad didn't cut him off, and that was almost worse. He sighed and signed over the trust fund *because you're obviously going to need it*, and then he told Steve not to burn through it too fast, and not to reach out. *I see no reason for us to stay in contact.*

Steve didn't touch the money. Not until after the heart attack, and the hospital, and the silence, and the heavy, unseeing gaze that seemed to pass right through him. Like he didn't matter. Like he never existed at all. He was completely unprepared for how much that could still hurt.

Seven months after that Robin took him to lunch. *Take a break*, she said, and *I'm not talking about a long weekend. You don't actually need the money, and the foundation is doing great. We can function without you.* Steve stared at her, and her expression softened. *You haven't taken any time since...well. So take the time. Go process your grief or find yourself or whatever. We'll be here when you get back.* That was over two years ago, and he was still out here looking.

Steve sighs and runs a hand over his face. He's not sure how long he's been standing here alone in the wind and the rain, staring out at the lake, but his hands are cold and his socks feel damp. He looks around one more time and feels, for a moment, like he could disappear into a loneliness like this. He never expected it to work, but something in his chest still feels hollow. He shakes his head. Maybe it's time to stop looking and go home. It's definitely time to get out of this weather. He hikes back to his car, changes into dry socks, and drives back to town.

When he gets there, he pulls into the parking lot of a coffee shop. He can sit and look at the map and decide whether to keep looking or catch a flight home. He orders a latte and a sandwich and pays, and when he turns around to look for a table, he walks right into the person behind him. Familiar hands grab his arms to steady him, and when he looks up to apologize, the world goes a little fuzzy around

the edges.

Blue eyes, soft on his face.

That fucking mouth, curved into a smile, small and genuine and pleased.

“Steve Harrington,” Billy Hargrove says slowly, voice rough with some emotion Steve can’t place. Steve doesn’t—can’t—say anything. He just stares. The smile widens a little. “You’re a difficult man to find,” Billy murmurs, and it takes Steve longer than it should to realize what he means. That Steve wasn’t—maybe never has been—the only one looking.

And then Steve smiles, and it’s the first real one in over two years. Because somehow, improbably, he found what he was looking for. And what he was looking for found him too.

Author's Note:

[Lost Lake is real!](#) I made up the legend, though.